

Last Lion of Albion

Neko Case

Early in the morning where there used to be a slough¹
There's a tiny business lake, don't let the cattails fool you
Down in the bottom where nothin' is born
Sleeps a silver dollar with your face thereon

5 I wish I could trace the frowning compass of your mouth
Drop a Mercury dime down a Roman drain and summon Mars

Last lion of Albion
They'll use you for centuries to come
They'll steal your patents for the sun

10 And you'll feel extinction
When you see your face on their money

Late in the heavens that are already bought
Sleeps a red planet in the galaxy of a lion's thoughts
On the surface every tendon and intended machine

15 Is gonna buckle, knuckle, kneel on a carpet of lion's tongues

Wish I could stand in the spray at the cliff of your sleek² revenge
Ocean of naked, serrated marble crushing in

Last lion of Albion
They'll use you for centuries to come

20 They'll steal your patents for the sun
You'll feel extinction

Last lion of albion
They'll use you for centuries to come
Your wound's the main road into London³

25 You'll feel extinction
When you see your face on their money

¹ *slough*: a marshy pool or inlet

² Although the standard expression is "sweet revenge," the lyrics on the song's Bandcamp page say "sleek revenge."

³ Perhaps a reference to the River Thames

Last lion of Albion
 The last she-wolf to mother Rome⁴
 The last virgin to wash ashore
 30 You'll feel extinction
 Last lion of Albion
 The last of the Mohicans gone⁵
 The last cedars of Lebanon⁶
 You'll feel extinction
 35 Last lion of Albion
 Last tiger of Tasmania⁷
 The last she-wolf to suckle Rome
 You'll feel extinction
 When you see your face (face) on their money

Questions for Discussion and Writing

1. What do many of the **images** in the song (e.g., the lion, the Tasmanian tiger, the cedar of Lebanon) have in common, and what **irony** is there in people's use of such images? What **theme(s)** does this commonality express? Cite specific details and literary devices (**images, allusions, metaphors, etc.**) from the song that help develop these **themes**.
2. What is the **tone** of the lyrics, as distinct from the sound of the music? In other words, what attitude about the subject matter of the song does the speaker seem to be expressing? Cite specific examples from the song to support your interpretation.
3. Given the **thematic** context of the song, what does the reference to the "tiny business lake" in which "nothing is born" suggest to you? What does "your face" probably refer to?
4. Mars, "the red planet," takes its name from the Roman god of war. Given the **thematic** context of the song, what does the reference to summoning Mars suggest to you?
5. In what way is the last lion of Albion "used," and why would seeing its face on "their money" make it "feel extinction"? Discuss the significance of money as a **symbol** of the song's themes.
6. In what sense might lions have a "patent for the sun," and how could it be stolen?
7. How would you interpret the speaker's likening of a lion's wound to "the main road into London"?
8. What significance do the **images** "the spray of your sleek revenge" and "ocean of serrated marble crushing in" suggest to you? Why do you think the speaker uses the word "sleek" instead of following the standard idiom "sweet revenge"? Consider the various meanings of the word.
9. The lyrics contain multiple references to the Romans. Discuss the **thematic** significance of Rome (and the Roman Empire) in the context of the song.

⁴ According to legend, the founders of Rome, Romulus and Remus, were raised by a wolf.

⁵ A Native American tribe decimated by conflict during the French and Indian War. Because of the popularity of James Fenimore Cooper's novel *The Last of the Mohicans*, the phrase is used as a more general reference to the last survivors of a noble population.

⁶ A prized tree whose once-extensive forests have been devastated by overuse and deforestation

⁷ An extinct carnivorous marsupial with tiger-like stripes native to Tasmania